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ABSTRACT

This study examined the motivation of teachers hosting preservice teachers in their classrooms during the early stages of preservice training. Preservice teachers from a foundations of education course observed for 4 hours each in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms early in their experience. Later, during a practicum, students spent 100 hours in one classroom. Finally, they completed student teaching. Study data came from: a written survey of participating teachers during fall 1999 (which asked about why they were willing to host education students); fall 1999 placement records from the field experience coordinator; and interviews with an administrator and a college faculty member who supervised student teachers. The administrator and faculty member commented on differences in motivation between host teachers and cooperating teachers. While there were many similarities between host teachers and cooperating teachers concerning why they were willing to host preservice teachers, there were also significant differences. Most teachers were willing to accept either foundations or practicum students. Many liked having student teachers because of having another adult to help. Most teachers had student-centered reasons for hosting students. Requests for practicum students were most common. Many more elementary than secondary teachers were willing to host students. (SM)

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ED 451 178

Motivation of Teachers Who Accept Beginning Education Students into their Classrooms

by Dr. Carolyn Ridgway

The problem: Increased requirements for field experience hours are becoming a common component of teacher education programs. Many of these field experiences occur early in the education course sequence. What motivates classroom teachers to participate in these early field experience programs by hosting preservice teachers in their classrooms?

A variety of persons and groups share responsibility for teacher education curricula. Many schools of education are redesigning their programs in an effort to prepare teachers for the challenges of the new century. These changes may be internally motivated or may be the response to an external mandate. One design trend on many campuses is a movement away from isolated methods courses to a design that includes frequent contact with children throughout the preservice program. These contact opportunities occur across a range of classroom levels in a variety of socio-economic settings and are, of necessity, of shorter duration than the student teaching experience. A goal of these experiences is to have preservice teachers interact with a larger variety of students in more classrooms than is possible in the student teaching experience. These multiple field experiences add breadth to the preservice experience of students and offer the opportunity for many more classroom teachers to become involved in the preparation of future teachers. This movement impacts preservice teachers, classroom teachers, college instructors and supervisors, and students in the classrooms that welcome preservice teachers.

Professional development schools are one model that encourages the sort of frequent interaction and immediate application desired in early field experiences (Teitel, 1997). However, such programs are highly time and labor intensive (Huling, 1998). Another method of promoting increased contact time with children is to increase the number of required field hours, hours spent by preservice teachers in classrooms with children. For example, the state of Colorado has recently increased the number of required field hours for elementary licensure from 400 to 800. No longer is student teaching sufficient to fulfill this requirement, other classes in the licensure program must also have a field component. More placements must be made.

Literature review: Several studies have examined the influence of student teachers on cooperating teachers. From these studies it is possible to gain some insight into why teachers do and do not welcome preservice teachers into their classrooms. For example, Koskela and Ganser (1998) report on the impact of serving as a cooperating teacher. They found that collegiality was important to these experienced teachers and that they looked forward to giving and receiving ideas in working with their student teachers. They felt they grew professionally through this interchange with student teachers. Cooperating teachers recognized their importance and influence on student teachers and believed that by

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mentoring student teachers, they could make a significant contribution to the teaching profession.

Fairbanks and colleagues (2000) discuss the importance of discourse in developing effective relationships between student teachers and their cooperating teachers over the course of the student teaching experience. These relationships are crucial to the affective rewards cooperating teachers receive from mentoring and take time to develop.

Marie Koerner's (1992) qualitative analysis of journals kept by cooperating teachers revealed some of the less positive consequences cooperating teachers experienced while hosting student teachers. These included the interruption of planned instruction, a displacement of the teacher from the central position in the classroom, disruption of classroom routines, and shifting of teacher's time and energy from the instruction of students to the instruction of the student teacher. Koerner, like Koskela and Ganser, also noted that teachers welcomed the breaking of their traditional isolation and they believed that they were contributing to the profession.

Contribution: Studies like those described above have focused on cooperating teachers, teachers who work with preservice teachers in the last phase of their training. These are college students who have already completed a program of education courses that includes both theory and methods across a range of topics. Student teaching is generally considered the final, capstone experience of preservice training. Wepner (1999, p. 82) states that "If we truly want to provide constructivist teaching for preservice teachers, we must give them multiple opportunities to use their firsthand experiences in the classroom to develop into reflective decision-makers about teaching." What might motivate a classroom teacher to help provide early preservice students with these multiple opportunities? Why would a teacher agree to take students for shorter periods of time during which it is less likely that meaningful relationships will develop? How are these teachers' motivations similar to and different from those of cooperating teachers who accept student teachers? Little, if any research has been done in this area. This presentation will report the results of a preliminary study that investigates the motivation of teachers hosting preservice teachers in the early stages of their training. It is classroom teachers like these who will play an increasing role in the teacher education curriculum.

Methods: At Adams State College, in Colorado, education students have three field experiences. The first is a twelve hour experience that was developed as a component of the Foundations of Education course, the first class that students take in the education sequence. In this course, students observe for four hours each in elementary, middle school, and high school classrooms. During the semester before student teaching, students serve a practicum during which they spend 100 hours in a single classroom. During their final semester, students complete a fairly standard student teaching program.

Data for this study was collected from four sources: a written survey of teachers participating in the foundation program during the fall 1999 semester, placement

records of the field experience coordinator for this same semester, an interview with this administrator, and an interview with a long-time college faculty member who has often taught the foundations course and supervised student teachers. Teachers who were involved in the foundations program were asked in an open-ended questionnaire why they were willing to host education students in their classrooms. The administrator and faculty member were asked to comment on their perceptions of differences in motivation between host teachers (those willing to have preservice teachers in their classrooms who are in early stages of the teacher education program) and cooperating teachers (those who have student teachers).

Results: During her interview, the coordinator for field placements commented that she believed most teachers were willing to accept either foundations or practicum students. She noted that the foundations experience is less intrusive and requires little on the part of the teacher other than providing a place to sit and observe. There is no experience requirement, first year teachers can accept foundations students. Three years of teaching experience are required to host either practicum students or student teachers.

The faculty member interviewed contributed the idea that the reasons for wanting student teachers or practicum students are not always altruistic. The teacher can derive benefits from having another adult to help plan and implement the curriculum. The benefits for the foundations teachers are not obvious.

The records of the field placement coordinator indicate that requests for practicum students were most common. Some teachers indicated their willingness to host more than one type of student, their responses were tallied in each category for which they indicated a willingness to have students. Eighty teachers requested student teachers, seventy-one requested foundations students, and 111 requested practicum students. These requests may indicate that teachers want competent help without giving up their central role in the classroom. This is an area that could be further investigated. An interesting aside that was noted during the examination of the placement records was that many more elementary teachers were willing to have education students in their classrooms than were secondary teachers no matter the placement level.

Forty-eight teachers who accepted foundations students in the fall semester of 1999 were mailed a survey at the end of the semester. Twenty teachers responded for a response rate of 42% The survey asked these teachers what grade levels they taught, how many years teaching experience they had, and why they were willing to accept foundations students into their classrooms. Answers were read and categorized. If a teacher mentioned more than one reason, each reason was tallied separately. Of the twenty respondents, seven mentioned the education students' need for early experience and seven mentioned their need for a variety of experiences. Five mentioned they derived personal enjoyment from sharing their knowledge and their students. All three second year teachers each mentioned the value of seeing a beginning teacher. Only one teacher mentioned the help the education student provided. One respondent gave no reason.

Here are some of the responses given:
"I have a great program, wonderful students, a cooperating community that works together to educate our children. Your students will benefit observing our students' environment and climate!"

"I think it is important to get potential teachers into classrooms as soon as possible in their college years. This will help a bit to guide them in choosing teaching (or choosing some other profession) and in choosing a grade level preference."

"It is valuable to expose our future educators to differences that one can observe with LEP/ESL bilingual students."

"As a new teacher, I know I have insight for pre-service teachers....I can encourage young teachers because the road isn't that far since I've traveled it. I want students to believe in the teaching profession and in themselves."

"I personally feel that student teachers benefit from multiple exposures to a variety of classrooms."

"I enjoy all of my students and I like people to see the good, normal and sometimes naughty kids perform."

"I believe I run a very good classroom and I want potential teachers to see an 8th grade classroom that goes well. 8th grade gets a bad rap, otherwise!"

After the responses had been categorized and tallied, they were identified as being either teacher centered or student centered, according to who received the benefit mentioned. Responses that indicated support of the program goals, *i.e.* early exposure in a variety of settings, or that the individual teacher personally had something of importance and value to share were categorized as being student centered, that is, the teacher's rationale was to provide something of value to the education student. Responses that mentioned personal satisfaction or help from the student were classified as being teacher centered, the teacher received something he or she valued from the experience. Fifteen teachers or 75% gave student-centered responses. Five teachers or 25% gave teacher centered responses. Interestingly, only one teacher's response fell into both categories. One teacher (5%) gave no reason for accepting foundations students. She was a first year teacher who was replacing a teacher-in-residence at Adams State.

Discussion: This is a small data sample drawn from a single college. Any insights drawn must be considered tentative at best. However, in terms of recruiting teachers, it appears there may be benefit in emphasizing that every teacher has something of value to contribute. The foundations program may be the students' only exposure to specialists and/or multiple schools and grade levels. There is a need for all teachers to participate to support the program goals. There may also be some benefit in individualizing requests sent to

teachers so that each mentions something specific the teacher might contribute. With a database and mail-merge, this should not be too difficult.

This pilot study collected primarily qualitative data. The results could be used to design a more quantitative response form that could be administered to a larger sample of teachers representing several teacher education programs. This would help determine if these preliminary findings generalize across settings. Another important step would be to contact teachers who do not accept education students into their classes and ask them why. These are the teachers that need to be converted if education programs are to be successful in placing students for more hours of field experience. These reluctant teachers' reasons for not accepting students are important to understand.

Conclusions: This preliminary study indicates that while there are many similarities between host teachers and cooperating teachers concerning why they are willing to have preservice teachers in their classrooms, there are significant differences as well. It is important to recognize these similarities and differences, both in order to provide an optimal learning experience for the preservice teacher, and to recognize and recruit appropriate teacher hosts.

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